

Villa near Florence 26th July 1874.

My dear Richards,

Many thanks for your kind letter of 20th Nov^r 1883, for I am convinced that is its true date, tho' oddly enough, it pretends to another. What a time it has been on the road! The good news in it set me in high spirits, yet I cannot but be anxious to learn how you have been getting on since that time. Are you all well and happy still? Do you continue in your house in Westminster near Stoney's gate? I know I shall hear from you again quickly, for I read an oath to that effect at the tail of your letter. Let us hope it will arrive in due course, without any delay whatever. I'm sorry I've no smaller writing paper at hand, and I forgot to cut it before I began, however I trust you will forgive the length of these lines, and the unconscionable number of them on each page. Of Harriet you write nothing except that she sends her "so and so"; why, she must be a great tall woman, apt at all household affairs and poetry, puddings and Italian, - the last I suppose she speaks like a Roman and like a Tuscan writer. So Tom scours across the Park to his other father, and is an excellent boy. And Sophia goes on trimly, but always away from home. And Sidney is going on for three years old. And Mrs Richards remembers me. God bless 'em all, and give my love to every one of them. Your exertions for young Thornton deserve my thanks as well as his and his father's; I'm afraid I left a troublesome job for you; as I've no idea of him but as I saw him last in Dundee, please to remember me to "Little Jamie". My Charley is with me and about me at every turn, in all the glory of high health and spirits, but at this moment somewhat interruptive. He is a dull rogue at his alphabet, and tells me he thinks it of no importance in order that he may read, which is duller still. As for his English, he appears to me equally dull there; tho' now I begin to talk to him in it, and he understands me on common matters; and sometimes he favours me with a few words of his own. I am very impatient in this affair, by no means liking to talk to my own boy in Italian. We have now been nearly three months together, and I grow angry at his obstinate southern tongue. In all other things he is sharp enough, and promises to be clever; but his talent for music is not quite to my taste, at least I shall not prefer that as the predominant one. His affectionate heart remains the same as ever; and, as we used to remark together, he requires a watchful eye and good government to keep him in the right path. The folks in Pisa took great care of him, and managed his disposition tolerably well, - which is a rare thing in Italy, as a child, out of their great love, is apt to be spoiled. I never saw a people so fond of children as Italians. I observed it immediately I passed the Alps, and it strikes every one in the same manner. This is the children's Paradise. But surely I am wrong in saying they are apt to be spoiled. I have written a slander; for here it is rare to hear them cry, and go where you will, tho' they expect to be noticed and delight in it, they are never forward and troublesome. One thing is, they are fed badly, - I don't mean poorly but the contrary, - and their stuffed stomachs make them more dull and heavy than English children, and so they are quieter. Carlino is too much alive & not to be easily spoiled. I think it was at Legna, where going up the stairs of the inn with Carlino in my hand, I saw three military gentlemen in grand uniforms talking on the landing place, and they no sooner saw the child, than breaking

off their conversation they called out - "Here's a little one, - a pretty
child!" - and making a sort of bow to me, they seized upon him, dandled
him about, kissing him first one and then the other; and setting him
play with their sword-knives and epaulets, - all to my great astonish-
ment for I never before beheld a gentleman-soldier so lose his dignity
for the sake of a live-doll. But I soon discovered it is far from being
unmanly to play the nurse in Italy. This puts me in mind, talking
my journey, of Mrs Edwards. She promised to write to me from Trieste
give me her address, and so on; and I've never heard of or from her;
you tell me how she is, and where she is? (27th) I've just had a
usual breakfast of salted tongue and fruit, - and having also settled accounts
my servant Francesco, I'll give you our fruit prices, viz: Apricots 1 fl.
Melons 3/4 each, Plums 1/2 fl., Green-gages 1 1/2 fl., Figs 2 for 10. As to
summer is much behind-hand; the fruit season is not yet at its height,
these are high prices; and ~~they~~ like every thing else, ~~are~~ ^{are} cheaper in the city
here in the country where there is no competition. The weather's very warm
and very pleasant, thermometer at eighty six; I wonder what it may
in England just at present, - perhaps it stands at forty three or under.
There's a fresh stirring breeze, and yet a pleasant wisely proclaimed
thought we should have thunder; the sun is wide awake, the waters dream
the birds in covert, the cicada ~~is~~ ^{is} screaming. I wish that same cicada
would be quiet, he worries out a country life in Italy with his contin-
hazing, one-note riot; and yet the country here looks very prettily, with
corn, wine, oil, and every thing for diet; and on that hill (I think) I think
more wittily, when strolling near the villa of Boccaccio, with my Carlo
sometimes my Carlaccio. Leigh Hunt lives ten minutes walk from the
far up a hill; for that air has been recommended for his wife; he
has been there since last October, and will leave it the next, for
for what other villa is not yet determined; - possibly he may go
into Florence for the winter, whither I shall certainly flit as soon
as I can meet with a good lodging there. The inconveniences of the
Country here, and also the torments, are too much; I am convinced
Italian gentry are right in quitting the "paese" in mid-summer and
mid-winter, - these months for revivifying are May and October.
Hunt talks of writing to you, acknowledging himself your debtor, but
he has weak health (without being ill) and makes his excuses just
his wife is tolerably well, and the children very well, - the girl he
lately had a sort of intermittent fever. How do you like the "Wishing
(28th) I intend to creep on from day to day to the end of this letter, or
the wind sits fair, I may finish it in half an hour; ^{how} there is no use
that, as it will not take its leave of post for three days to come. Since
I left in Rome, which he has now left for a healthier air during the
hot months in Albano. Never has he enjoyed such good health, which
ascribes to Dr. Clarke and myself, - and I don't know but he places
me before the Doctor, and I don't know but I deserve it. He is no
rather fortunate in his profession, and that gives him the highest
spirits; and he is or fancies himself to be in love, - but whether
the women say) it will ever come to any thing is more than I
may say, - perhaps two bodies know more about it. - (I wish to
speak to Charley, and not let him annoy me so just now.) - Give

remembrances to Mr. T. M. Severn when you see him, and say it is quite
a top-up - heads or tails - whether or no. He is to be blessed with a
sister-in-law; however she is a good and delightful creature, he may
rest assured of that; and I had well nigh fallen desperately in love with
her myself. You are sadly in error imagining that L. Hunt should
feel himself so unfortunate in the death of Lord Byron. Why should he?
He had been ill used enough by his Lordship to destroy all feeling of
sorrow at his loss, and threatened with worse, had not fear of retaliation
withheld that worse. Talk of Lord Byron as a poet and libelster, but as
a man you had better be silent. There is more truth in those unfeeling
sentiments of his "Don Juan" than the words believe, - all the heartlessness,
the faith in the caducity of mankind, and the anger shown towards goodness,
were parts and parcels of the author's self; - never was any thing written
more "con amore" than his address to gold at the beginning of the 12th
Canto, - but he could not only be miserly, but despicably mean in saving
his cash, ^{and} not only ^{generously}, but wrongfully. The other day I read
his "Child Harold" for the first time; I had often peeped into it, but
never finding a good stanza, I used to shut it up again. Why I at last
read it is more than I can well explain; - and indeed I could not help
skipping now and then, especially when he talks of his "unhappy mind"
his "blighted hopes", his "heart forlorn". Never was there a more gross
piece of quackery. There was a time when I believed in all this, and
only thought the man should keep his sorrows more to himself. For
my mind there is very little poetry, and no music of verse in the
"Child", - his "Don Juan" is his best work, with all its inhumanities.
How delighted I have been with Anstasius! I am not generally
partial to such misbegotten half-villains, but he is fine of them
all. The style is too laboured, - you see the author ~~there~~ it; which
is a pity, as it has much profoundness and wit; the last part, where
he is travelling in Italy, with his little son, and where he loses him, cut
me to the heart, and I could scarcely read all that anatomising of his
grief afterwards, and yet I could not leave off for a moment, - I had
Caroline in the journey of death, then a corpse in my arms, then in his
coffin, and then I put him in his grave, over and over again at every
sentence, - pretty novel reading, this! You are fond of odd things, - I'll tell
you one. Did the last stanza of "Adonais" never strike you as a curious
coincidence with the death of Shelley? Severn first remarked it to me,
and looked very serious. Lately I mentioned it to L. Hunt, who let me
know there was something still more curious connected with it; for
Capt. Williams (who was drowned with Shelley) had ~~been~~ always much
struck with that concluding stanza, and, being an amateur draughtsman,
absolutely made a sketch of the "Bark driven far from the shore and to
the tempest given" - while the soul of Adonais "like a star", "beacons
from the abode where the Eternal are"; - and this, almost immediately
before that storm in which they were both drowned! Come, I think
this story beats your hollow of the fatal mouse, - though it may only
tend to make your own the more absolute. For my part I am willing
to believe in both, and a thousand others, but cannot, - but pray don't
burn me alive for this, or even cause me to be fined and imprisoned.
By the by, it would be just as reasonable as to put Carlier's men in limbo,
for I have hereby published my disbelief in what your Worship may call Religion.

To return to St. P. I have a smart clean servant, Joseph Francisco, a man all work, a factotum; he makes beds, keeps the house clean, is an excellent cook, goes to market (for we have no market here), dresses and undresses Carlino, mends his clothes or puts a button on, runs on messages, and in fact can do every thing, but read and write. I, in my charity, rounded him on the shame of this deficiency, when he twiddled his fingers about and blushing up to his forehead, said - "he had once begun to read, but the Doctor said it was bad for his eyes." - "But your eyes are good enough now," said I, "and I will teach you, if you choose." - "They are certainly good enough," he answered, "and so are you, Sir, but - but I'll think of it!" At present I give him no more than £16.10/- p.w., without board, - too little, I must (and he hints as much,) increase his means. He has a wife, a she

Aug/24

Inglaterra. P. L. R. E. N. E. E.

To/ Thos Richards Esq.

Storekeeper's Office,

Ordnance Department,

Tower,

London.

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AUG 14
1834

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- Tailor in Florence with two infant children "I thought it better," he told me "to marry a woman with talents, than with a portion; and my wife worked on, supporting her children, and allowing me two faults a day". Surely thought I, (vide Franklin), she pays too much for her whistle. But, according to our Italian fashion, I suppose it is not only one whistle she has bought - tho' mind, I don't speak this with certainty. - Crimcon forbid it! - besides, tho' a good trim pretty figure and not bad features she is fitted with the small pox the life and soul of one's being, and with her, tho' a Durella unmarried, I could live, and live on for ever, and think I could never die. But more of this anon when I write more fully, for at present I am only
Your loving friend, Chas. Brown.



